



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Institute of Standards and Technology
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899

March 9, 2006

Dr. William J. Tilstone
President, National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation
% Forensic Quality Services
7881 114th Ave. N
Largo, FL 33773

Dear Dr. Tilstone:

This letter is to inform the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) that the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) must withdraw from the NACLA Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA), effective April 15, 2006.

As you know, NVLAP is a fee-supported program and, as such, has been forced to look closely at resources available compared to expenses incurred, both in effort and in dollars. Of primary focus must be the return on the investment made by NVLAP's accredited laboratories. Broad recognition of the test and calibration results generated by the accredited laboratories is currently achieved through NVLAP's signatory status in the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) MRA and through the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) MRA. NVLAP has also participated in the NACLA MRA in order to comply with the NIST requirement that designated CABs supporting trade agreements for telecommunications and information technology products be accredited by a NACLA MRA signatory. Outside of this requirement, there has been little interest expressed by the NVLAP-accredited laboratories that NVLAP maintain signatory status in the NACLA MRA.

In order to support continued manufacturer access to a broad base of designated CABs, NIST has broadened its recognition of qualified accreditation cooperations to include, in addition to NACLA, other laboratory accreditation cooperations that are in full conformance with the standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), including ISO/IEC 17025 and ISO/IEC 17011, and verify conformance to these standards by evaluation and assessment of peer accreditation bodies. Both ILAC and APLAC meet these requirements.

NVLAP must look to increase efficiencies and reduce redundancy in its participation in laboratory accreditation cooperations, to minimize the burden on its accredited laboratories and on NVLAP staff. Under current conditions, NVLAP can no longer justify the costs of continued NACLA MRA participation. Should conditions change such that it would be beneficial for NVLAP and its accredited laboratories to achieve NACLA recognition in the future, we would certainly consider taking the necessary steps. NVLAP regrets having to take this action and wishes NACLA much success.

Sincerely,

C. Douglas Faison, Acting Chief
National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program

cc: Mr. Joseph O'Neil
Executive Administrator

NIST